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NOTE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The attached letters are hereby circulated pursuant to the understanding reached at consultations of the whole of the Security Council held on 7 April 1999.

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Annex I

Letter dated 2 April 1999 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

At its meeting today, the North Atlantic Council discussed the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation resulting from the continuing violence and expulsion of civilians from Kosovo by forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We greatly appreciate the tremendous ongoing efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other relief organizations to cope with the flood of refugees under difficult circumstances. The Council has reaffirmed its willingness to contribute to these efforts.

Therefore, I have been invited to raise with you, as a matter of urgency, what possible measures the Alliance could take to assist UNHCR at this time of great need. In particular, I would be grateful if you could let me know as soon as possible the most critical requirements now facing UNHCR, in particular in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, and which could possibly be supported by the Alliance, including possible use of its civil and military assets. I understand that our staffs have already been actively discussing several possibilities in this regard.

I can assure you that the Alliance member States are prepared to make every possible effort in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to assist you in addressing this current humanitarian emergency.

(Signed) Javier SOLANA

Annex II

Letter dated 3 April 1999 from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees addressed to the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Thank you very much for your letter of 2 April 1999.

I very much appreciate your offer of support to assist us in coping with the heightened humanitarian emergency caused by the mass expulsions of civilians from Kosovo. In a public statement yesterday, I urged the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to bring an immediate halt to this forcible displacement.

Meanwhile, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its United Nations and non-governmental organization partners, in collaboration with the local authorities in the receiving countries in the region, have been doing whatever possible to meet the most urgent shelter, food aid and health needs of the refugees. The scale of the crisis is such, however, that our capacity to respond has indeed been overwhelmed. This is particularly the case in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where over 270,000 people have arrived since 24 March 1999 and where, as you know, arrivals are continuing on an hourly basis at alarming rates. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide the necessary support in other neighbouring areas, and notably in Montenegro.

In these circumstances, any support from the Alliance member States for the humanitarian operation that would enhance our efforts to save lives would be most welcome. I should like to suggest that this operation would focus on Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where the requirements are greatest. It should cover the following four areas.

First, we would welcome continued assistance with the management of the airlift operation that we already established with your support to bring in relief supplies into the airports in Tirana and Skopje. Second, we would be grateful for support in off-loading and immediate storage of aid arriving by sea or air into Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The United Nations agencies would retain responsibility for onward distribution to the beneficiaries. Third, in response to the bilateral requests already made by Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Alliance member States could provide logistical help in the setting up of refugee camp sites. UNHCR would provide the necessary coordination, guidance and technical support. And fourth, there is an urgent need to relieve the pressure on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which otherwise risks destabilization. I would therefore be grateful for your support to UNHCR in obtaining the agreement of Alliance member States primarily in the region - and most notably Greece - to accept some of the refugees currently in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on a temporary basis. Logistical support in transporting the refugees and accommodating them in receiving countries would also be required.

I am sure you will appreciate the importance of retaining the civilian and humanitarian nature of the aid operation in order not to unnecessarily expose the front-line States, the relief workers on the ground and the refugees themselves. UNHCR would therefore welcome your proposal that the support be provided by interested Alliance member States through the Civil Emergency Department at your Headquarters.

Should you agree, I would propose that further operational discussions take place on the ground between those responsible on your side and my staff, led by my Special Envoy, Nicholas Morris, who is currently in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The focal point for all contacts at UNHCR headquarters is Neill Wright, under my overall direction.

Let me also mention that I have welcomed the offer of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Albania and the OSCE/Kosovo Verification Mission operation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to provide support to the humanitarian effort, notably in processing the arrivals at the border entry points where the situation is right now the most acute and dramatic.

I should like to thank you most warmly in advance for your support.

(Signed) Sadako OGATA